

B) U9 NEW RULES OF PLAY (TRANSITIONAL CONTACT)

Players and match officials must ensure that the following Rules of Play and RFU Regulation 15 are observed when playing rugby at Under 9. The below Rules shall apply to Under 9s rugby unless specifically stated otherwise.

Club rugby: As of 1 September 2013, the Under 9s Rules of Play set out below are mandatory and replace the previous Under 9s Rules of Play in their entirety in respect of all club rugby.

School rugby: The Under 9s Rules of Play set out below are discretionary only in school rugby but the RFU will continue to work with IAPS and the ERSFU with a view to eventually converge schools' Rules of Play with those of club rugby. The previous Rules of Play that can still be played by Schools can be found at www.rfu.com/thegame/regulations.

The **key changes** between the previous Rules of Play and the new Rules of Play are the following:

Key Changes	
Team numbers:	7-a-side instead of 9-a-side
Pitch size:	60 metres x 30 metres instead of 60 metres x 35 metres
Contact:	Introduction of the tackle only instead of rucks, mauls, lineouts and the uncontested scrum

1. Object:

- The object of the game is to score a try (5 points) by placing the ball with a downward pressure on or behind the opponents' goal line. A penalty try will be awarded if a try would probably have been scored but for Foul Play by the defending team.
- When a try is scored, the game is restarted by a free pass (see 5 below) from the centre of the pitch by the non-scoring team.

2. Teams:

- Under 9 Transitional Contact Rugby is played between teams of equal numbers of players, containing not more than seven players and not less than six players on the pitch at any one time.
- Rolling substitutions is permitted and substituted players can be re-used at any time. Substitutions can only take place when the ball is "dead" or at half time and always with the referee's knowledge.

3. Pitch size

- The maximum pitch size is 60 metres by 30 metres, plus 5 metres for each in-goal area.

- b) Reduced pitch sizes are acceptable provided this is agreed between the officiating referee and coaches, and the smaller pitches do not materially increase the risk of injury to players.
- c) Adjacent pitches should be no closer than 5 metres.

4. Passing:

- a) The ball can only be passed sideways or backwards (but not forwards). If the ball is knocked forwards (towards the opponents' goal-line) then a free pass is awarded to the non-offending side, unless advantage occurs to the non-offending side. In order to keep the game flowing, referees may play advantage wherever possible.

5. Free Passes:

- a) A free pass is used:
 - i. to start the match at the beginning of each half from the centre of the pitch
 - ii. when there has been foul play
 - iii. for a forward pass
 - iv. for a knock on
- b) At a free pass, the opposition must be 7 metres back from the mark. They cannot start moving forward until the ball leaves the hands of the passer. At a free pass, the player must start with the ball in both hands and, when instructed by the referee who will call "PLAY", pass the ball backwards through the air to a member of their team. For safety reasons, no player may run until the pass is made. The player taking the free pass must pass the ball when the referee calls "PLAY".

6. The Tackle:

- a) Only the ball carrier can be tackled. The ball carrier can run and dodge potential tacklers but cannot fend them off using their hands ("hand off") or the ball. The ball cannot be pulled out of the ball carrier's hands at any time.
- b) A "tackle" in the transitional game is deemed to be:

Any contact below the arm pits of the ball carrier which results in a grip by the opponent of the ball carrier. Where the ball carrier remains on their feet the referee must call "tackle" (**allow approximately 3 seconds to establish whether ball carrier held**). Where ball carrier is taken to ground, the referee must call "tackle"

ACTIONS BY THE BALL CARRIER in the tackle:

- c) The ball carrier, on hearing "tackle" from the referee must pass the ball to a supporting player from their own team, either from standing or from the ground within 3 seconds of the call.

- d) Once “tackle” has been called the ball carrier can continue to go forward (if on their feet), but must pass within the 3 seconds.
- e) The ball carrier cannot score a try once “tackle” has been called and must pass to a supporting player.
- f) If the ball carrier is within a metre of their opponents try line the referee should allow the 3 seconds before calling “tackle”. If the player touches the ball down over the try-line within that time, a try should be awarded.

ACTIONS BY THE TACKLER:

- g) The tackler must grasp the ball carrier below the arm pits, on the shirt, shorts or around the legs.
- h) The tackler may not contest the ball (grabbing it, blocking the pass), but must simply work to stop the ball carrier from gaining ground.
- i) **More than one defender is allowed in the tackle**, but must allow the ball carrier to pass the ball.
- j) Once the referee has called “tackle”, the defender can continue to keep hold to prevent further forward movement of the ball carrier, but must release and rejoin the game once the pass has been made. If the tackle is made to ground, the tackler must get to their feet as soon as possible, but cannot contest the ball or block the pass and must endeavour to get in an on-side position (between their own try line and the tackled player).
- k) If the ball carrier has not been held for 3 seconds and the referee has not called “tackle”, the ball carrier is allowed to score a try after being tackled, or in one movement (if on the ground) place the ball over the try line.

ACTIONS BY THE ATTACKING TEAM:

- l) When the tackle is made the ball carrier’s team should support from behind.
- m) The supporting players may not assist the ball carrier in moving forward by either driving with the shoulder or “binding” on.
- n) The supporting players must be in a position to receive a pass.
- o) A supporting player may rip the ball from the ball carrier but must then pass the ball immediately to a team mate.
- p) Supporting players must not deliberately stand either side and in close proximity to the ball carrier to prevent defenders from making the next tackle.
- q) A supporting player may pick the ball up from a tackled player or ground, but must then pass the ball to a team mate.

ACTIONS BY THE DEFENDING TEAM

- r) When the tackle is made other defenders cannot join the tackle (i.e. it is a 1 v 1 tackle).

- s) The tackled player represents the off side line and defenders must endeavour to retreat to stay between their own try line and the tackled player until the pass is made (off side).

7. Transitional Rugby Variation

- a) **TO BE AGREED BY BOTH COACHES & REFEREE PRIOR TO THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE MATCH. Where the players are confident & proficient and to challenge them further:** To reward good defence and to promote the attacking side keeping the ball alive by passing the ball before being tackled, the side in possession of a ball will only be allowed to be tackled a maximum of 6 times before scoring a try. At the 7th tackle, the referee will stop the game and give the ball to the other side by awarding a free pass at the point that the tackle took place. If the 7th tackle takes place one metre from the try line and the ball is grounded, the try will be disallowed and the opposition will be given the ball for a free pass 7 metres out from the goal line, in line with the point the goal line was crossed.

8. Offside:

- a) Offside only occurs at the time of the Tackle where the offside line is the hindmost part of the tackled player. When a Tackle is made, all the other players from the tackler's team must attempt to retire towards their own goal-line until they are behind the hindmost part of the tackled player. If a player, in an offside position, intercepts, prevents or slows down a pass from the tackled player to a team mate, a free pass will be awarded to the non-offending side. A player can, however, run from an onside position to intercept a floated pass before it reaches the intended receiver.

9. Obstruction:

- a) The ball carrier can run and dodge potential tacklers but cannot fend them off using their hands ("hand off").
- b) The tackler can only make contact with the ball carrier below the arm pits.
- c) If such contact is made the game must be stopped, the offender spoken to, reminded of the contact rules and a free pass awarded to the non-offending side.
- d) If the ball is pulled from the ball carrier's grasp, a free pass is awarded to the ball carrier's side.

10. Kicking:

- a) There is no kicking of any kind.

11. Ball on the Ground:

- a) Players play Rugby on their feet, with the ball in hand. If the ball goes to ground, players should be encouraged to pick it up. If they dive to recover the ball they must either get up or play the ball (pass) immediately and be allowed to do so by their opponents.

- b) If the ball was lost forward, a free pass is awarded to the non-offending side unless advantage occurs to the non-offending side.
- c) If the ball is passed other than forward and goes to ground play will continue and either side may pick up the ball. If the passed ball rolls into touch a free pass will commence at one metre in from the touchline to the non-passing side.

12. Prohibited Play:

In Transitional Rugby, there is total emphasis for the attack; on running with the ball, evasion, running in support of the ball carrier and passing; and for the defence: on running to tackle the ball carrier, prevent them going forward, and to get back into the game. In Transitional Rugby, the following are not permitted:

- a) no contact above the shoulder;
- b) no lineout;
- c) no kicking;
- d) no scrum;
- e) no hand off/fend off (a hand off being the placing of an open palmed hand by the ball carrier against an opponent's face or body while a fend off is an outstretched arm by the ball carrier towards an opponent to discourage that person making a tackle) (see also 9(a) above);
- f) no ripping of the ball by the defender (see also 9(d) above).